

Office of the Mayor
City & County of San Francisco



Gavin Newsom
Mayor

May 15, 2006

Gloria Young, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
One Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, California 94133

Honorable Clerk:

I write to communicate my veto of ordinance 060250, which establishes Saturday closure of roads in Golden Gate Park. Over the last several weeks, my office has worked hard to identify solutions to several concerns raised by this proposal. I have met personally with both supporters and opponents of Saturday closure to better understand different perspectives on this proposal. Through this dialogue, I have concluded that this proposal in its current form is unsupportable—due to a lack of understanding about its impacts and my concern about contravening the will of the voters.

The intent of road closure in Golden Gate Park is well meaning and aligns with my administration's goals of increasing health and fitness opportunities for local residents. Closure of JFK Drive and nearby roads in Golden Gate Park provides a safe space for residents to explore San Francisco's most magnificent park. Many families, children and seniors have long-enjoyed Sunday closure to explore the park on foot, bikes and skates without auto-traffic—a welcome natural retreat from the hustle and bustle of our dense city.

While road closure offers clear recreational benefit, it appears to have adverse impacts. Residents of the Richmond and Sunset report increased traffic and parking problems in their neighborhoods that compromise their quality of life. Nearby businesses that rely on parking for their customers report decreased sales on Sunday. The Conservatory of Flowers, a cherished community institution, reports sharply decreased Sunday visitation. And importantly, leaders of the disability community report access concerns to the closure area.

Any decision to expand Golden Gate Park road closure must be based on an objective analysis of reported impacts. However, these positive and negative impacts have never been studied. As a result, policy makers have little more than anecdotal information on which to base their decisions about Saturday closure. I propose that Saturday road closure be considered only with information on the impacts of Sunday closure. Indeed, such information would lead to a proposal that maximizes positive recreational impacts of closure and minimizes other negative impacts.

In addition to better understanding impacts of current road closure, future proposals should unite—rather than divide—our community. The current specific closure proposal has been the source of great controversy since it was placed on the ballot in 2000. As my office has discussed this specific proposal with supporters and opponents, road closure alternatives in the park have become apparent that promise less negative impacts. I have asked the General Manager of Recreation and Parks to explore these other closure alignments that provide similar recreational benefits with less negative impact.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, I am very concerned about passing legislation to advance a proposal that has already been rejected by the voters. In 2000, two ballot measures proposing some form of Saturday closure failed at the ballot. Although many explanations exist why these measures failed, the simple fact remains that they failed. Pursuing the same exact road closure through the Board of Supervisors after rejection by the voters is not a path I can support.

I commend Supervisor McGoldrick and supporters of this legislation for working closely with our office in recent weeks to address concerns from my administration and community members. Their efforts have been appreciated and have underscored the benefits of creating more safe recreational spaces in our city. I look forward to coming opportunities where we can collaborate to achieve their vision for a healthy and more environmentally friendly city—beginning with more organized promotion of the Sunday closure as a recreational opportunity for local residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Newsom', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gavin Newsom